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TAGS: [TBIO](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#) [NGO](#)

SUBJECT: EXPOSING RISKS OF HIV/AIDS IN BURMA

1. SUMMARY: The Ministry of Health held Burma's second annual HIV/AIDS exposition in Rangoon, attracting 70,000 visitors, raising HIV/AIDS awareness, and administering on-site HIV/AIDS tests to those interested. However, whether the expo successfully reached Burma's high-risk populations is unknown. END SUMMARY.

2. The GOB held its second annual HIV/AIDS exposition in downtown Rangoon on Nov. 4 - 9, drawing PM Gen. Khin Nyunt and daily crowds of 10,000 visitors. It was so well attended in fact that authorities extended the expo until November 12. Representatives from the Ministry of Health, along with UNAIDS, UNICEF, WHO, UNDP, Population Services International (PSI), Medecins Sans Frontieres-Holland, Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association, Myanmar Medical Association, Myanmar National Railways, and a host of other GOB, international NGO, and Government operated NGO organizations answered questions and handed out HIV/AIDS-related literature.

3. A walk around the exposition hall made it clear the event was designed to raise awareness and educate at all levels -- curious citizens, government employees, and thousands of visiting school children -- on the risks and consequences of activities that can spread HIV/AIDS. Frank and sometimes graphic presentations of HIV/AIDS transmission vectors and HIV/AIDS symptoms adorned the walls of many of the booths. Visitors were given a plethora of professionally produced pamphlets on HIV/AIDS issues, including themes of heterosexual and homosexual transmission, intravenous drug use transmission, mother-fetus transmission, home-based care for family members living with HIV/AIDS, and also effective use of male and female condoms.

4. In addition to educating, the Ministry of Health also administered "confidential" HIV/AIDS tests and counseling on site, and by day seven of the expo had drawn blood from over 130 visitors. The Ministry also showcased an HIV/AIDS counseling telephone hotline reportedly available to the public throughout the year.

5. COMMENT: Whether the exposition successfully targeted high risk groups was hard to gauge, but it was heartening to see the general population so well represented in the audience. Though the confidentiality of the HIV/AIDS tests offered on site was impossible to determine, the Ministry official staffing the booth seemed firmly convinced that the testing process and results would be kept confidential. The GOB will mark World AIDS day on December 1 with a low-key field day in a Rangoon Park, co-sponsored by UNAIDS and the Ministry of Sport.
Martinez